

*And remind (others), for the reminder most certainly benefits the Believers
Surah Zhaariyaat, verse 55*

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MODESTY AND A MUSLIM WOMAN

QUESTION

It has been brought to my attention that gatherings which is not in accordance to shariah are taking place. A group called FRIENDS has been active for the past 6 years. The initial purpose and intention of this group was to uplift women, give them support, help guide them to the right path. Especially divorced women, widows. But now it has become a gathering for the rich, women who are in purdah are exposed to men in these gatherings, there's no cautions taken into consideration for the laws of shariah. There are women who even do match-making against the laws of shariah. They have groups with men in it and allow the women to chat. The members who wish to join these gatherings have to pay towards the expenses of these gatherings. It's not voluntary. It's like a high tea gathering for the elite and not poor community.

My questions are:

Are such gatherings allowed in Islam?

Are these people not imitating western ways in such gatherings?

I feel the Ulema need to speak about this in the musjids, so that the men can tell their wives inshaAllah. It needs to be spoken about in every community.

In this time of fitna and fasad. We have to start standing up against these gatherings because these women are allowing dunya's glamor to sweep them off their feet.

ANSWER:

In Islam a mixed gathering of males and females is not allowed. A function where such intermingling takes place is haraam regardless of what noble intentions and objectives the organisers had envisioned. The hurmat or haraam nature of such a gathering is compounded and worsened by the fact that the event is advertised, and people are invited to attend. The organisers of such an event will share the sin of all those who attend, as well as all those who copy such events in the future. The burden of sin in this case is whopping and phenomenal.

Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: "One who initiates an evil practice then he/she gets the sin of that evil as well as the sins of all those who commit that evil without any reduction in their burden of sin."

If a hundred people attended the function where haraam was committed, the organisers have earned the sin of their own actions as well as the sins of those hundred participants. If one commits a sin in private, and makes an effort to hide that sin, it remains a sin but there is no escalation to the evil. The evil is not intensified or compounded. Even the perpetrator cannot be declared a faasiq. A faasiq is one who flouts the Law of Allah openly and with total abandon. Therefore, when a group of people announce their intention to conduct a mixed gathering and they invite people to such a gathering, they are openly breaking the law of Allah, and are encouraging others to do so. This is public violation of Shariah. Any Muslim who has a little bit of iemaan will understand that such a get-together is totally haraam and contrary to Shariah.

Even if such gatherings are for females only, there are several other wrongs that occur.

- The very first sin is the emergence of women from the confines of their home for an unnecessary purpose. Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) said: "When a woman leaves home, Shaytaan follows her with his gaze." Shariah allows women to leave their homes for necessities. This gathering is one of entertainment and enjoyment.
- Women will dress up in their finery to impress other womenfolk: this is the sin of riyaa or showing off. Here too, this ostentatious behaviour is worse since it is committed among a gathering of people. The questioner has already mentioned that now this event has become a gathering of the rich women. These females will probably rock up in their flashy expensive cars and other showy paraphernalia. Can there be any barakah or spiritual benefit in such events? It must be noted that even if the gathering is attended by the not-so-rich women, it remains haraam for other reasons, as mentioned further.
- When leaving home, the application of perfume is a must. And the perfume women generally use is strong smelling and long-lasting. This is contrary to the hadeeth of Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam). One hadeeth likens such women to prostitutes who go out to ply their evil trade, since this (application of strong perfume) is one of the practices used to entice menfolk.
- Imam Hasan Basri (rahmatullhi alayh), a great Wali of Allah and Scholar of Deen said: "There is no good in a congregation of womenfolk." Ulema have explained that in such gatherings women resort to discussions that entail gossip, gheebat, and even slander.

This event is haraam regardless of its purpose. Even an Islamic or Shar'ee motive is not sufficient when the method adopted to achieve that objective is un-Islamic. The end does not justify the means.

It is said that the idea is to support and counsel women who are divorced. I believe this is just a myth. Experience has shown that many divorced women have gone through their challenges without the need of counselling and upliftment. Of course, there may be those who have experienced trauma in their marriages and even post-divorce trauma. Among them there are those who have developed their own internal

mechanism to handle post-divorce trauma. Others seek their own private counselling. A woman's nature is ingrained in privacy and modesty. (Well, that is how it is supposed to be; sadly, the modern woman has divested herself of almost all forms of modesty!) Women don't generally air their internal challenges and traumatic experiences in public. If there are female Muslim counsellors out there who believe they can assist such traumatised women, then they should do so in the privacy of their homes and consulting rooms. A get-together as the one described in the question is not necessary. The Shar'ee principle is that when an act that is not necessary is accompanied by violations of Shariah, it becomes waajib (obligatory) to abstain from such an act. There is no doubt as to the haraam accompaniments of such functions.

On the topic of female counsellors, we have learnt that some of them adopt western, un-Islamic styles and methodologies in their counselling sessions. This means that there is no difference between their methods and those of the kuffar counsellors. In the process, certain kufr concepts and ideas are employed to counsel and advise clients. Needless to say, these concepts endanger the very iemaan of the one seeking counselling. Instead of repairing them spiritually, the exact opposite occurs.

The concept of having "retreats" and incorporating this in counselling for females is also contrary to Shariah. In Islam, the noblest form of spiritual retreat is the I'tikaaf in Ramadaan. And for this "spiritual retreat" women are instructed to observe it in the inner recesses of their homes, not even in the masjid or anywhere outside the confines of her home.

In summary, gatherings of this nature should be avoided, for they are not in conformity to Shariah, not conducive to retaining modesty in females, and are forerunners to other forms of fitnah. Our sisters have a duty to Shariah to shun events of this nature. May Allah guide us all to His Pleasure and Obedience, aameen.

INTERACTION WITH A NON-MEHARAM

Rasoolullah (Sallallahu alayhi wasallam) is reported to have said:

"For a man to brush shoulders with a pig that is soiled in (its own) filthy mud, is better (or safer) than touching shoulders with a woman who is not halaal for him." (Tabarani)

THE MODESTY OF JIBREEL (ALAYHIS-SALAAM)

One night Jibreel alayhis-salaam came to Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) when he was with Ummul-Mumineen Ayesha (radhiyallahy anha). The purpose of the visit was to convey the Command from Allah to Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) that he should visit the Jannatul Baqee' cemetery in Madina Munowwarah and pray for its inhabitants. When Rasoolullah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) returned from the cemetery, he found Hazrat Ayesha awake. He informed her where he had gone and then said to her: **"Jibreel refused to enter the room because you were not fully clothed (since she was in bed). He (Jibreel) remained hidden from you, and I, too, ensured that he did not see you in this condition."** (Musannaf Abdur-Razzaaq, hadeeth no 6918, abridged)